

JEFFERSON COUNTY PARKS DEPARTMENT

ANNUAL REPORT

AUGUST, 2013



Mission Statement:

To preserve natural resources for public use and conservation, to operate and maintain a parks system with resource oriented recreation, trails and specialty parks; and to expand the parks system for environmental and land use benefits and the health and enjoyment of Jefferson County residents.



The Jefferson County Parks Department is made up of 15 (full and part-time) employees that oversee, manage and maintain approximately 1020 acres at the 16 County Parks, 31 miles of the Glacial River Bike Trail and 182 miles of public snowmobile trails. We partner with the Wisconsin DNR through the Glacial Heritage Area to coordinate a system of county-wide water trails. Our maintenance responsibilities also include all Jefferson County owned grounds as well as flood mitigation properties. Our department is very proud of the Parks System we maintain and is happy to share with you some of the highlights from the past year.

Glacial Heritage Area

The department continues to work in partnership with the DNR on a variety of projects within the Glacial Heritage Area (GHA). Accomplishments include:



- The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by both the Jefferson County Board and the Wisconsin DNR. This is a significant accomplishment and an exciting time within the parks system as we partner on various properties to provide desired, high-quality outdoor recreation.
- The Acquisition Subgroup continues to prioritize properties within the GHA boundary area for acquisition. The Wisconsin Natural Resources Board is currently considering purchasing one property near Watertown. All properties are purchased only from willing sellers.
- Work on extending the separated-grade, black-topped Glacial River Bike Trail continues along with



the Highway 26 bypass project. Jefferson County is grateful to the WI DOT for their partnership in making this trail a reality. The trail is very popular with local citizens and visitors. It offers both recreational opportunities as well as an additional mode of transportation through the county. The Jefferson and Fort Atkinson Rotary Clubs have adopted the trail between Jefferson and Fort Atkinson. They have already held one clean-up event and two more are planned. We are thankful for their partnership and continued support.

- The Holzheuter State Park Master Plan is in the final stages of development. A group of professionals from Jefferson County, WI DNR and Trek Bicycle Corporation have been working on the plan. Mountain biking will be a key recreational opportunity within the park. Implementation of the master plan is anticipated to start soon after the plan is completed.
- The Friends of GHA continues to offer many educational and volunteer opportunities. Please check out the website for information on upcoming opportunities. This is a great way for individuals to discover the hidden jewels of our County.
- Watertown to Waterloo Bike Trail Feasibility Study: A feasibility study was completed to construct a multi-modal trail between Watertown and Waterloo. The department is currently meeting with a committee to look at various funding opportunities to construct the trail. We would like to thank Augie Tietz for his continual dedication and hard work to this project, as well as bike planning and trail planning within Jefferson County.



Rock River Trail Initiative



The Rock River Water Trail was designated into the National Water Trails System by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. This is a significant accomplishment and provides an incredible tourism opportunity for Jefferson County. The Rock River Water Trail is a 300-mile river course from the headwaters in Fond du Lac and Dodge Counties, Wisconsin, to the Mississippi River at Rock Island, Illinois. Work continues on establishing separate Rock River road and bicycle routes within the river corridor to provide access for all to the natural resources, recreational opportunities, scenic beauty and historic and cultural assets of the Rock River Valley. Currently, the implementation team is working to cohesively sign the water trail. Joe continues his work on the implementation team.

The water trail is a delineated path on the Rock River that connects access sites, resting places and attractions for users of water craft. The trail enhances public use of the river for recreation with way finding and amenities such as restrooms, shelter, parking and camping. While the water trail is primarily designed for use by paddle craft, it also provides significant recreational value for swimming, fishing, hunting, pleasure boating and river stewardship. Key objectives of the water trail are to:

- Promote ecotourism and recreational opportunities throughout the river corridor, including safe portage of the dams,
- Enhance the river ecosystem through natural resources conservation, stewardship and environmental planning and design,
- Support economic development and revitalization of our river communities, and
- Enhance community recognition using unique signage, markers and public materials to conserve and promote the natural, recreational, scenic and historic assets of the trail for present and future generations.

Dr. J. S. Garman Nature Preserve



The Garman Nature Preserve contains 22 Indian mounds. Park staff restored all the mounds to their original state. The department followed WI DNR and Ho-Chunk Nation guidelines for the restoration. Pictured at left is a picture of the mounds dedication celebration that was held last fall.



Joni Crave, a dedicated supporter of the Garman Nature Preserve, has led many educational hikes through the preserve. Pictured below, a group enjoys a hike within the preserve. We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Joni for her continued work in promoting the Preserve to the City of Waterloo and beyond.

Improvements this year include a new shelter with landscaping and rock retaining wall. We would like to thank Mrs. Theo Garman for funding the majority of the development within the Preserve. Our department continues efforts to work in collaboration through public and private partnerships.



We continue to work closely with the City of Waterloo on the Garman/Knowlton Trailhead Facility. Ground has been broken and construction is progressing on schedule. The trailhead facility will serve the Garman Nature Preserve as well as Glacial Heritage Area.

Jefferson County Dog Park

The Jefferson County Dog Park continues to be one of the most heavily used parks within our parks system. Attendance and revenue growth is seen annually.

Improvements made to the park this year include the continuation of pavement of the entrance road. It is anticipated that the entrance road will be completely paved by the end of 2013. The paving is done in conjunction with the Jefferson County Highway Department.



This park continues to succeed based on donations from organizations and individuals. We'd like to thank the City of Jefferson Parks and Recreation Department for their partnership in providing the facilities to host the third annual Dog Days of Summer (dog swim event) at the Jefferson Aquatic Center.

The Parks Department is extremely grateful to the many individuals and organizations that continually provide support for this asset in Jefferson County.



Dorothy Carnes County Park



In 2011, Jefferson County initiated a Handicap Hunting program. No applications were received. In 2012 the department offered a youth hunt and received 8 applications. Two applications were selected. Youth and their mentors hunted during the WI DNR Youth Hunt Weekend in October 2012. Pictured at left are Caleb and Jason Hacht with Caleb's first harvested deer. We will again be offering a youth hunt in 2013. The department is also looking at other parks to determine if limited hunting would be feasible within the system.

Kevin Wiesmann, Operations Supervisor, has taken the lead on the Mason Log Home restoration project. The log home was dissembled during the fall of 2012. Over the past winter, staff and volunteers have worked at the Park shop to reconstruct the log home. Pictured at right is their progress. A condition assessment report was completed for the cabin, through a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



The first annual Mason Jar Jamboree was held in September of 2012. This was the kick-off event for fundraising for the restoration project. The event raised approximately \$4,000. The second Mason Jar Jamboree event is scheduled for September 7, 2013. A dedicated group of volunteers are planning this wonderful event that offers music, food, history lessons and a leisurely afternoon in the park.



We would like to thank all the generous supporters of this project. First, the Mason Family for all their support and a \$25,000 matching grant for the project. To date in 2013, \$17,140 has been raised for this project. This has been accomplished through a direct mailing by the Mason Family as well as multiple donations received in response to the wonderful coverage within the Daily Jefferson County Union. With a fundraising goal of \$70,000, we continue to accept donations and are actively

pursuing grants for the project. In addition, there have been a number of non-monetary donations received for this project such as logs, historical display items, concrete and flat work as well as labor.

The Friends of Rose Lake continue to be an instrumental part of the success of Dorothy Carnes Park. We are thankful for the educational walks that they host as well as the numerous volunteer hours they provide at the park. A highlight this year was the spotting of a Eurasian Wigeon, in the park. This is significant in that there are usually only one to two spotting's of this bird within the entire state of Wisconsin per year.



Snowmobile Program



Jefferson County has 182.7 miles of public snowmobile trails. The County trails are funded by a grant obtained by the Jefferson County Parks Department from the Wisconsin Snowmobile Grant in Aid Program. The Jefferson County Snowmobile Alliance works closely with the Parks Department to ensure a safe snowmobile trail system. The Parks Department was recently awarded the grant for the 2013-2014 season of \$45,675. The Parks Department charges an annual administrative fee for coordinating this program.

Parks Volunteer Program

Opportunities for utilizing volunteers within the parks department continues to increase. This year a Friends of the Dog Park group was started. This group meets on a monthly basis and has planned a number of educational as well as fun events. The Friends of Rose Lake and Friends of the Glacial Heritage Area are continuing in their efforts and meet regularly as well as, and are very active in offering educational events.

Our department is regularly contacted by local individuals or organizations that wish to donate or assist the park system in some manner. This year, for the second year in a row, the Dorothy Dash was one of those events. Two elementary school students from Fort Atkinson organized a run to raise money for Dorothy Carnes Park.



We also extend our sincere appreciation to the volunteer hours and projects that were donated over the past year by the Friends of Rose Lake, Friends of Korth Park, Friends of Glacial Heritage Area, Friends of the Dog Park, Mason Log Home project volunteers and local boy scout troops.

Park Shelter Rentals

We are having another very strong year for park shelter rentals. Korth and Dorothy Carnes shelters continue to be of highest demand. Currently, we have 100 rentals scheduled for 2013.



Park Endowment Fund

The Parks Department in coordination with John Molinaro and the Natural Resources Foundation continues to promote the Park Endowment Fund for the Jefferson County Parks Department. This fund is one way that we can ensure the parks are preserved into the future.

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